

CROSSING THE LINE.

A Day Spent in Seeing the Sights in Unique Old San Antonio.

PLENTY OF MILITARY TITLES.

A Little Experience With Mexico Custom House Officials.

FEATURES OF OUR SISTER REPUBLIC.

(WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.)

SAN ANTONIO claims to be, and is, with color of title, one of the three oldest cities within the limits of our glorious republic. I possess a reverence for ancient and holy things, animate and inanimate, hence I must notice the features of our sister republic. There is sufficient modern vitality in the place to give it a place to those who have a weakness for mixed drinks. You can, being at this generation, be at ease in it and away from home. You may adhere to its business streets and live in the present, or you may wander off a few blocks and revel in the environments of two centuries ago, or, again, among some of its modern homes of mixed architecture you recognize the domicile of your nearest neighbor, Jones or Smith, if you happen to live in town or in the suburbs.

There is nothing like style, and style has its limits either in bonnets or houses, and as it changes with the moon it is not surprising that the minds of the builders as well as the on-lookers are tortured. Think of moving once a month to be in the fashion and thus keep pace in the family. And as for homes—well, San Antonio has them, ancient, perhaps modern.

HOUSES OF ALL KINDS.

But they are surrounded with flower beds and broad galleries, overshadowed by mighty trees that compel a plainman to take off his hat in reverence; they are not over one story high, as a rule, these homes, and one experiences a nestled-down feeling, a protection from bustle and money-getting, as one looks on them; there is a sacredness about them that the monthly changes in peaks and gables, and the taste for being in the fashion cannot aspire to. One of these exploits, not in San Antonio, without any cornice and mostly of shingles, and occupied by an estimable gentleman of wealth, every reminder of a man who has been scalped.

I have thought sometimes that the designers have been attempting to imitate something and have failed. And again, looking up and wondering at the inconceivable angles of some of these modern achievements, I have gone on wondering whether it could have any possible connection with the birth of the baby, or with that other mystery of unspeakable sorrow, when the elaborate door is thrown open to let the sweet little ray of sunlight that will never come back again.

THIS GENERATION AND THE PAST.

San Antonio has her Generals, her Colonels and Majors—nothing beneath in titles worth mentioning. Generals who stalk about heavily with canes, their old-fashioned neckties manneled in old-fashioned socks; they bow slowly, and make one think that they were born grown up men who, in ordinary moments, say "Yes, sir," with emphasis, and in moments not ordinary, "Yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir." They live in the memory of the good old days, and are fond of to have been born later. But it is a pleasure to meet them, they loom over one and impress us with the dignity of the old school and the importance of a small part of the human race when civilized.

And then, too, she has her small part of the human race when civilized.

Then there is the Mexican in one scale, but when we step a little further on in several scales, considered from a social standpoint. Here he is serene and moves slowly if ancient ruins, out of which he may be neither coarse nor refined. His education seems limited to acquiring a daily living peddling peon, candy, tamales and chile con carne. He looks splendidly out of his great dark eyes and grows you with a conciliatory smile—a remnant, perhaps, of that look of the hospitality that characterized at least one side of the house of his ancestors not quite four centuries ago.

THE SOUTHERN MAN OF COLOR.

And then there is the colored brother, with the deeply bowed, proud, dignified, and seemingly to him and which, unfortunately, he seems unable to manage, and we seem as weak as he in the solution of the problem. There is something of his father's manner in his gait as the aged ones that has nothing of servility in it. It seems to me as cordial under the present gray hairs, as under the white ones of nearly a century ago. It may be the dignity of inborn politeness, only, but that is always beautiful. It cannot of itself detract from one's self respect or lower one's standing to view the rest of the narrow sidewalk to another passing by. But the gallant young fellow in a red necktie and cane does not so consider it. He travels the earth as though he were created for his especial behoof and he has no hesitation in crowding the white stranger into the mud; it is done with an air of lordly indifference that seems to be annoying because it is ludicrous.

SO WAGS THE WORLD.

Presently there came two of our fellow passengers for smoke and the discussion of investments. They were away from home seeking rest, but they might as well have remained in Boston or New York and suffered with dollars and nephews. They were hammered at general finances and the prospects of Texas investments until I was constrained to ascertain by manual investigation what the value of the dollar was in possession were melted. I found my pitance safe. But the whole country was on the high road to the devil, and in New York, where I had supposed the dollar was safe, I learned of more "fools" to the acre than I thought the entire Union could tolerate and yet hope to exist.

In fact, the country had been ruined and reorganized a dozen times in the last four hours, and the conviction has been forced upon me that we have but a sprinkling of great men, left. We have had a war with Germany on account of Samoa, Bismarck was at one time court-martialed, ordered to be shot or hanged, but by the intervention of Divine Providence or Mr. Ochsler, was rescued at the sublime moment. At one time it was inimated that Ben Butler would kick ass-kick to the moon. If he should do it, it would be a great deal of kick to see anything. Pending the dark of these weighty matters we crossed the Rio Grande and were upon a foreign soil, I

my civility in that direction is greeted with impudence.

STREET SCENES IN SAN ANTONIO.

Moving on, along a street paralleled by a dead wall and an ancient, lattice-work window building on one side and the modern marvel on the other, I am more forcibly reminded of the incongruity of the prevailing craze. It is a good deal like attempting to patch an old garment with new cloth. Still the fragrance of the flowers, the songs of the birds and the grand trees dampen one's disposition to cavil and force one to cheerfulness. The strangers I meet smile cordially and that has a neighborly, non-metropolitan influence which induces a home feeling. Finally, I encounter a General taking his constitutional, or perhaps, on the way to that indifference from other than a New England standpoint. The effect attending his numerous social duties of the night previous still lingers about him and attests their rigid propriety. Our acquaintance is slight, but sufficient to command recognition on this occasion.

Had I visited the West End? I had. San Pedro. The Alamo and the other missions in any circumstances. The military post? No, not yet.

"Great General! The most attractive feature of our city? You must not omit it, sir!"

I admitted, while I deprecated the possible necessity of soldiers and my indifference to military posts as a rule. My explanation was lacking in tact; the General glowered and the pain full effect of his stock, and he had me a good morning, reddened his cheeks and realized the loss of an invitation to join him in his constitutional, while I pursued my way.

HOUSES OF ALL KINDS.

In the afternoon we are on the road again speeding toward the border between the two republics. The country presents the same appearance of prairie, with patches of chaparral and groves of live oaks, and one experiences a nestled-down feeling, a protection from bustle and money-getting, as one looks on them; there is a sacredness about them that the monthly changes in peaks and gables, and the taste for being in the fashion cannot aspire to. One of these exploits, not in San Antonio, without any cornice and mostly of shingles, and occupied by an estimable gentleman of wealth, every reminder of a man who has been scalped.

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THE OLD ALAMO MISSION.

A gate, and a not frequently traveled road winding pretentiously through the woods suggests visions of a home beyond or in the midst of the shade. We catch only a glimpse of the gate, and the gate as we run by, but sufficient to learn that the gate was in consequence of a broken hinge, and the elliptical rut in the ground proves that the accident is not recent.

At dusk we were halted for supper, but I had no appetite. It was rumored we should have a good supper. Twenty minutes later I was ready to be quelled touching the truth of the report. The tablecloth was a wonder in whiteness; so were the napkins. The glass shone even under a kerosene glow. There were beautiful bouquets of fresh flowers, and drawing me along across my white plate I left trail behind. Dark knickerbockers in bright calico gowns and gay kerchiefs on their heads waited on us. There were biscuits no larger than a silver dollar that melted in the mouth, dainty salads of, to me, novel but exquisite taste, coffee that rivalled the color of newly minted gold and of a fragrance I had deemed unattainable. The chicken, tender fried chicken, that would have tempted the censorious palate of old Lucullus after a square meal in the Apollonian Hall; the jellies and cakes were superb.

Do not cavil that I thought of the preacher and the bread and butter; but it could have been no such fried chicken that gave birth to that chattering; a taste of it would make the preacher wish to spend the remainder of his life here and, when he deceased, unlike the gallant "Little Phil" (peace to his ashes), to live in Texas, or within half of that paradise in the kitchen. But think of 20 minutes to devote to such a marvel!

AN EYE TO BUSINESS.

Coming out, the deacon said he had a mind to stop over till the next train.

"Is it the egg-oven, deacon, or the chicken?"

"Neither," and my susceptible friend denied picking his teeth to wipe his lips, and walked with me in silence to the train.

"Do you know that ham commands 75 cents a pound in Mexico and lard in proportion?"

"Why wouldn't it be a good idea to drive to Mexico?"

A MEXICAN CABALLERO.

hogs over there—there is no duty on them."

"Some enterprising American has already engaged in that business."

"Not you, do you say? His tone was one of disappointment, and he relaxed into silence. Finally:

"Did you notice those two pretty black-eyed girls in the hall, where we had supper?"

"Yes, one has a squint."

"That's a—see here, old fellow, that's a squint, and she is a beauty. I don't want to go alone with my cigar, and to wonder whether this inclination of his toward black eyes might lead him, perhaps myself, being his friend."

THE BEST YEARS OF LIFE.

But Only a Woman Can Properly Mold From All the Years of Their Happines.

From 21 to 25 might be the best years of life, but upon one condition only that seems possible. The condition is, that the man be in bonds of noble servitude of admiration to a noble woman. There will be much of disquiet attendant upon such a service; but it will be the restlessness of a sure and certain growth, and growth in the highest direction. Ah! but the woman must be of exalted mold—little short, indeed, of a divinity. Otherwise, it were disastrous.

lessly subject to the imperious will of unreasonable Mexican Custom House officials.

A LITTLE EXPERIENCE.

This was to be a new experience with me, odious to the average free thinking American, accustomed to having his own way. I expected to be jailed out of life, and executed at sunrise ceremoniously, but with ceremony, because of an unbroken package of smoking tobacco in my possession. National pride blundered my throwing the parcel out of the window, and while I silently debated the matter, at one time feeling regret at leaving my gun at home, the gold-rimmed porter of the Pullman Company announced: "Ladies and gentlemen will now have their baggage revised at the Custom House."

In passing I inquired of this descendant of several races, touching the first proof, and he grinned, having passed a brief apprenticeship in a printing office.

I presented my open grip of collars and neckties, and the porter, a stout, affable gentleman two shades darker than the porter. He smiled when he encountered the box, and said something to a bystander which I failed to catch, but supposed to be an order for my immediate arrest, delivered in Spanish. The bystander relieved my anxiety by assuring me that the officer concerned was a mere custom house official, and brother republicans motioned me to close the grip and he then plastered a white paper upon it with a calligraphic and incomprehensible flourish, and the porter, a stout, affable gentleman two shades darker than the porter. He smiled when he encountered the box, and said something to a bystander which I failed to catch, but supposed to be an order for my immediate arrest, delivered in Spanish. 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